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E.O. 12958: DECL: 08/29/2019

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SUBJECT: NIGERIAN FLIGHTS TO THE USA: TAXIING FOR TAKEOFF?

Classified By: Consul General Donna M. Blair for reasons 1.4 (B) & (D)

¶1. (C) Summary: Visiting FAA representatives report that the Nigerian Civil Aviation Agency (NCAA) is close to meeting all eight requirements for Category 1 status for Nigerian carriers to fly to the United States and that it could gain that status as soon as mid-2010. End Summary.

Status of CAT-1

¶2. (C) At the end of a three-week visit, FAA Inspector Larry Williams and team told Lagos Econoff that the NCAA would most likely pass the first six of eight elements of CAT-1 status: autonomy, administration, personnel, security, licensing, and training. FAA legal counsel staff added that the NCAA would most likely meet the remaining two CAT-1 elements, compliance and enforcement.

¶3. (C) In early October, a team from the NCAA will travel to Washington, D.C., to enable FAA legal staff to review NCAA manuals covering maintenance schedules, pilot and flight crew training, and other areas. Once this happens, the next step will be an International Air Transportation Association (IATA) visit to Nigeria to conduct the International Air Transportation Association Safety Audit (IOSA). Once the IOSA is passed, CAT-1 status will be granted, which could mean that Nigerian airlines could be granted permission as soon as mid-2010 to fly to the United States.

Who will fly to the USA?

¶4. (C) The FAA indicated that Arik, Virgin Nigeria and Bellview are candidates to fly to the U.S., although each airline has issues. Arik has problems servicing the loans on its Boeing aircraft, Virgin Nigeria is apparently focused on becoming a regional airline, and Bellview's safety record is sufficiently problematic that USG employees are barred from using it.

¶5. (U) This cable was cleared with Embassy Abuja.
BLAIR